

SEARED GULCH FIRE SALVAGE TIMBER SALE

November 19, 2007 Land Board

Location of Sale:

- Plains Unit (NWLO) – Approximately 18 air miles North of Plains, Montana.
- Sanders County – Sections 20 & 28, T23N, R26W
- Trust Distribution – 100% Public Buildings
- This fire salvage sale is within the Chippy Creek Fire perimeter.

Sale Volume & Estimated Value:

- The estimated volume is 18,520 tons (3,483 MBF) with an estimated minimum value of \$342,620.00 or \$18.50/ton.
- In addition to the estimated stumpage value, a fee of \$5.13/ton for Forest Improvement would be charged for all merchantable sawlog timber harvested.
- 5.32 tons/MBF is the conversion factor.

Sale & Harvest Treatments:

- This sale consists of 4 harvest units totaling 578 acres.
- A seed tree silviculture prescription would be applied to all harvest units which would focus on harvesting all fire killed and fire stressed trees that were burned in the Chippy Creek Fire. Trees infected with dwarf mistletoe would also be harvested. Healthy, large diameter western larch and ponderosa pine trees that survived the fire would be favored for retention as seed trees in the harvest units. Seedlings would be planted within 1 to 3 years after harvesting in portions of the harvest area where there is no seed source and natural regeneration is unlikely to occur. Other areas within the harvest units where trees survived would be monitored for natural regeneration and planted, if necessary.
- No old growth would be harvested.

Harvest Systems:

- 82% tractor
- 18% skyline

Road Construction:

- Approximately 2.0 miles of new road construction are required to access harvest units and 4.0 miles of reconstruction/recondition are needed to bring existing roads up to current BMP standards. All currently closed roads and all new construction would be closed to promote wildlife security and reduce the spread of noxious weeds.

Public Involvement:

- Public involvement was solicited through legal notices published in the *Valley Press* and the *Sanders County Ledger*. Letters were also sent to adjacent landowners and special interest groups. The public, DNRC specialists and specialists from other agencies helped identify the issues that were analyzed. The areas of concern were wildlife and the spread of noxious weeds.

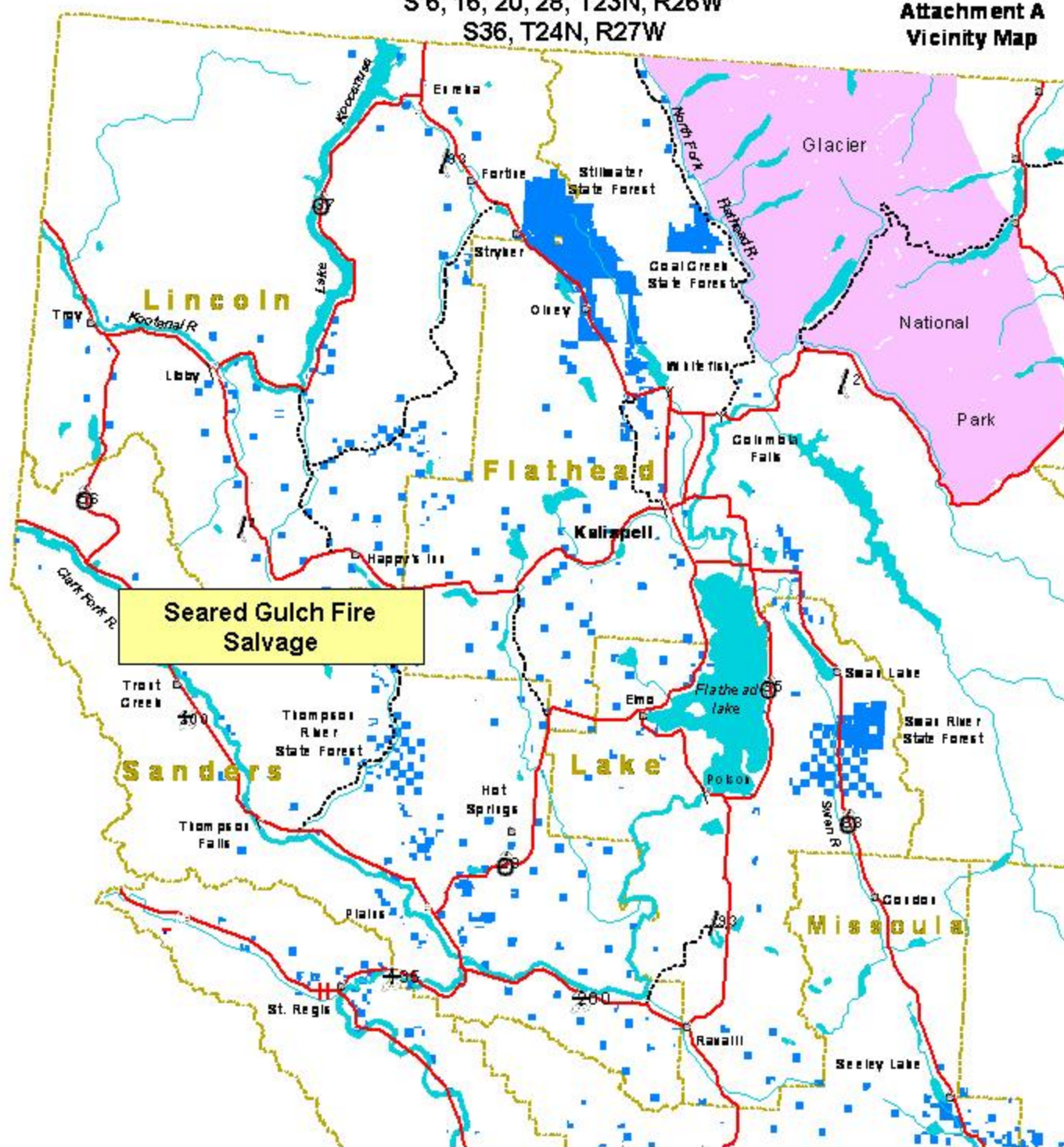
Public Comments, Issues and Mitigations:

- **Big game** - The project area involves lands within identified and delineated big game winter ranges. Big game security would be maintained using a combination of restricted road access and visual screening along the open county road when possible. Retention of shrubs and trees along the open road, road closures, broken topography, and pockets of untreated areas will maintain limited sight distances within the project area. Hunter access would not change with the action alternative.
- **Gray Wolf** - There are no known wolf dens or rendezvous sites within the project area. However, if a wolf den or rendezvous site is discovered during the sale, harvest operations and road-use would be temporarily halted or restricted within 1-mile of a den site or 0.5 mile of a rendezvous site until a DNRC wildlife biologist could be consulted in order to comply with ARM 36.11.430. Unnecessary roads and skid trails would be closed after the proposed activities to reduce the potential for motor vehicle disturbance.
- **Pileated Woodpecker and Flammulated Owl** - Favor western larch and ponderosa pine as leave trees. Manage for snags, snag recruits, and coarse woody debris according to ARM 36.11.411, 413-414, particularly favoring western larch and ponderosa pine. Restrict public access to reduce potential loss to firewood gathering.
- **Black-backed Woodpeckers** - Approximately 217 acres (16% of the state-owned burned area) of black-backed woodpecker habitat would remain unharvested in the Cook Mountain project area. In addition, snag and snag recruit trees would be retained within the proposed harvest areas. At least 1 snag and 1 snag recruit per acre over 21 inches in diameter would be retained if available. If not available, then a snag or snag recruit tree in the next largest available size class would be retained. In addition to large snags, 1 snag between 15 to 21 inches in diameter would be left per 2 acres. An alternative Practice has been issued for this proposed sale that would allow mechanized activities within 0.25 miles of any unharvested 40-acre black-backed woodpecker habitat patches during the nesting season which is from April 15 through July 1. Efforts to have contractors complete the road construction and begin harvest operations near black-backed woodpecker leave patches in all areas of the sale as soon as possible after sale award would be made in an effort to minimize any disturbance to these patches once the nesting season starts.
- **Noxious Weeds** - Heavy equipment used for felling, skidding, log processing and loading activities would be washed and inspected before being brought on site. All disturbed areas would be seeded with a native grass mix. The project area would be monitored and, if needed, scheduled for herbicide treatment.

The Director recommends the Land Board direct the Department to sell the Seared Gulch Fire Salvage Timber Sale.

Seared Gulch Fire Salvage
S 6, 16, 20, 28, T23N, R26W
S36, T24N, R27W

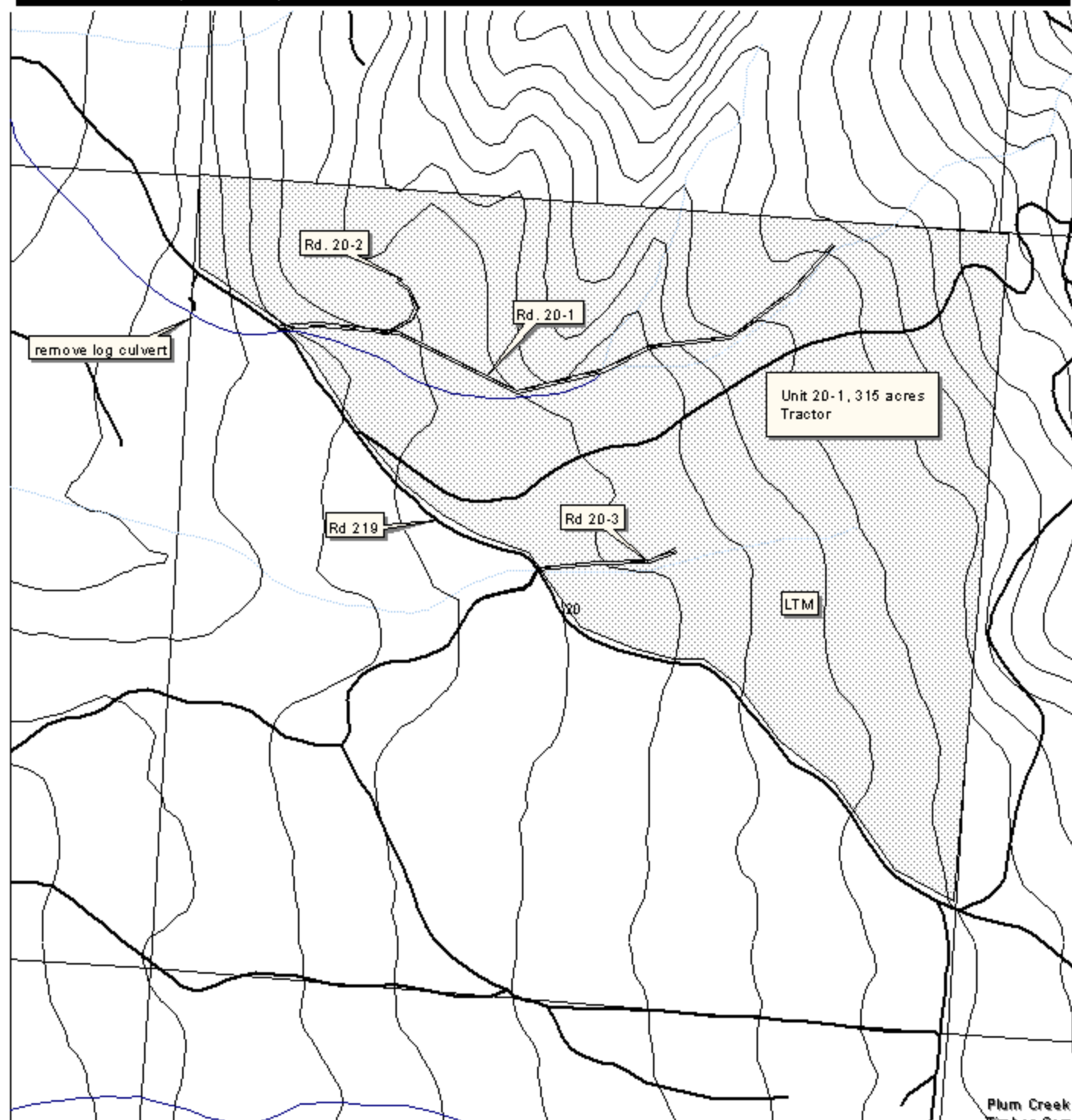
Attachment A
Vicinity Map



- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| Highways | Lakes |
| Other Roads | Streams |
| County line | State Land |

Seared Gulch Salvage, Harvest Plan

Sec. 20, T23N, R26W



--- Abandoned road

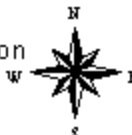
— Reconstruction

Existing Roads

— Open, Unedited Open

Unit 20-1, 315 ac

Montana DNR
Trust Land Management Division
Northwestern Land Office
Plains Unit



0.1 0 0.1 0.2 0.3 Miles

1 : 11,681 1 inch = 0.18 miles

Seared Gulch Salvage, Harvest Plan

Sec. 28, T23N, R26W

